

A little boy from Oklahoma decided early on one year exactly what he wanted for Christmas--no toys, no games, what he wanted was his very own oil well. He decided he could get rich quick and retire early, maybe around the age of 8 or so. He visited Santa Claus at the local shopping mall to plead his case and Santa told him if he wanted an oil well he had to be very good between now and Christmas. However, this was not a good little boy, and as Christmas Day approached he kept getting into more and more trouble. He broke the screen on their home computer, accidentally set fire to the Christmas tree, and in the interests of science conducted an experiment on his sister's goldfish in the microwave. Christmas morning dawned and he ran into the living room hoping to see an oil derrick under their scorched Christmas tree. Instead there was a hand-written note from a very disappointed Santa Claus that read, "No well, no well, no well, no well."

Giving and receiving gifts is an important part of the Christmas season. Is there anything more intriguing than a wrapped present? You have some clues what's inside by the shape and size, but you really can't tell by looking. To give a gift is to take a risk. By wrapping it up, you increase the expectations of the receiver. You take a risk that you will be able to fulfill what the other desires. The gift is a symbol of you and you might fear that if your gift isn't pleasing, maybe you won't be pleasing. To give a gift you put yourself on the line.

It was with some fear then that I went shopping for this present. It's a Christmas present for Jesus and I want it to please him. Actually it's a birthday present, too. He's one of those people who celebrate their birthday at Christmas so you can get away with buying one present for both occasions. Choosing a present for Jesus is not very easy. Did you ever try to buy a gift for someone who created everything? I finally settled on this: It's a t-shirt that says, "Human and proud of it."

The meaning of Christmas is that God became human. He didn't become super-human, he became human. The all-powerful One became vulnerable, the all-knowing One became misunderstood, the Creator of all became ineffective, the lover of justice became a victim. God became human and said, "This is OK, I can live with this." It's OK to make a mistake, it's OK to risk giving a present, it's OK to love someone. It's OK to be human.

At Christmastime we want everything to be perfect--the house to be clean, the meal to be just right, peace in the family. But we are humans, we are not perfect. If like Jesus we are truly human, our human nature can never get in the way of celebrating Christmas. It doesn't matter if we burn the turkey, buy the wrong gift, or if Aunt Susie yells at Uncle Len. Human nature is to be loved, as God loved it so much that he made it his own on Christmas Day.